



Williams: Visiting troops in Afghanistan.

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"GOOD morning, Bagram!" The greeting that echoed through the hangar at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan was none other than that of actor-comedian Robin Williams, who brought Hollywood's images of Vietnam to the screen in his popular film, "Good Morning Vietnam."

As Williams proceeded with his impromptu performance, soldiers at the air base responded with uncontrollable laughter. It was a beautiful sight, said one soldier, thanks to the USO and Williams' unyielding desire to visit troops in Afghanistan.

"It was important for me to come here because I wanted to let the soldiers know we haven't forgotten them," Williams said. "Recently, most of the media's attention has focused on Iraq, and people need to know there's still a war going on here, and it's an important one."

The Oscar-winning comedian made sure his Thursday and Friday visit to the war-torn country was as memorable as some of his movies.

"I thought he was great," said SPC Bob

Melone from the 772nd Military Police Company from Taunton, Mass. "He was so funny. He appeared at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation building with so much energy."

"He did a great job," said SSG Erik Mileski from the 351st Ordnance Company from Uniontown, Pa. "The show seemed to really lift everybody's spirits."

After the MWR show, Williams signed autographs and posed for photographs.

"It was amazing meeting all types of people here at Bagram," Williams said. "I met a husband-wife team who took pictures with me three times because their camera wouldn't work."

Williams also ate at the base's newly opened north dining facility, visited the Post Exchange and was deeply moved when he stopped by the hospital.

"You have an amazing hospital here," Williams said. "I went there and saw how you are taking care of people with land mine injuries, including a little boy who was literally put back together. It's got to be hard, but you are doing an extraordinary job."

Although his trip was brief, Williams said it was a great visit and he hopes to come back with a small number of friends.

"I want to say I'll be back," he said. "I'm sorry if I couldn't meet everybody, but it'll be great to bring back a few comics and split them up and do a couple of simultaneous shows." — SPC Alfredo Jimenez Jr., 28th Public Affairs Detachment

WORKING on any project from the ground up is probably never easy, but SFC Clinton M. Covert, the 11th Signal Brigade's equal opportunity adviser at Fort Huachuca, Ariz., proved you can do anything you put your mind to.

He focused on earning a doctorate degree while serving as an active-duty, senior non-commissioned officer.

The oral defense of his dissertation at the University of Southern California recently culminated 10 long years of Covert's higher education.

The dissertation focused on senior enlisted Army soldiers' motivational orientations and perceived barriers to college participation, he said.

Covert, who earned his doctorate in education and is now known as "Dr. Covert" to friends and colleagues, chose this topic for various reasons.

"I entered the Army at the age of 17, and I didn't give much thought to getting a college degree," he said. "In fact, like a majority of the soldiers I interviewed, I was a first-generation student. That is to say, my parents held no more than a high school diploma. As I was growing up, college wasn't discussed as a possibility.

"I had over eight years in the Army before I enrolled in my first college course," said Covert, whose research for his dissertation revealed that many soldiers couldn't enroll in college courses because they're assigned to tactical units that deploy frequently.

On the upside, however, he also learned that soldiers were able to overcome the obstacle when they have the support of their chain-of-command, he said.

"Many soldiers I talk to assume that I must have had easy assignments in order to accomplish this," said Covert. "But I point out that I have also been assigned to tactical units that required numerous deployments and field training exercises. The key

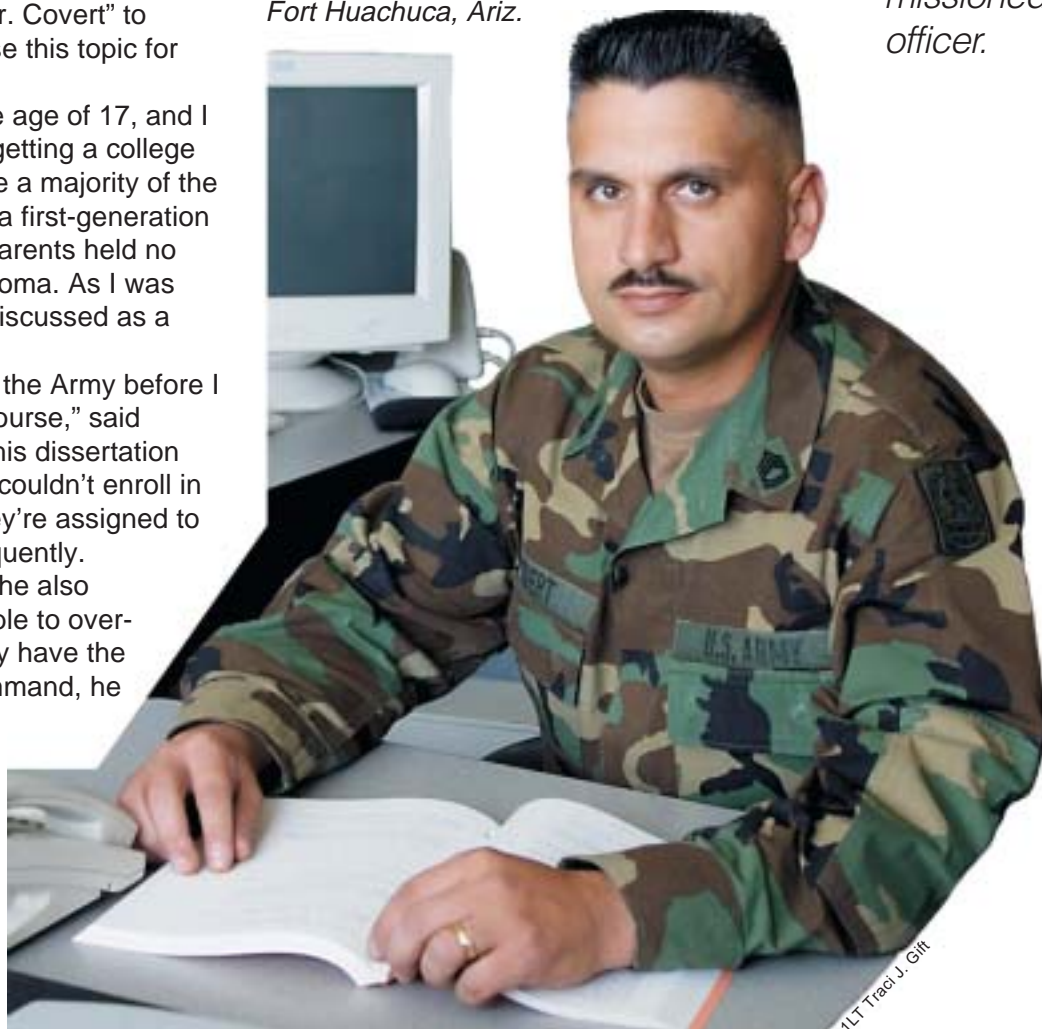
for me was taking advantage of opportunities as they presented themselves."

As an example, in 1994, instead of waiting for the required courses for his master's degree to be available at his duty station, Covert used leave to take the coursework at different education centers throughout Germany. By doing this, he was able to finish a two-year program in 12 months.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company will publish Covert's dissertation this fall with the study's complete findings available at www.umi.com.

Covert, who is scheduled to retire July 1, plans to enter the federal system as an Equal Employment Opportunity administrator and teach as a university professor. — 1LT Traci J. Gift, 11th Signal Brigade Public Affairs Officer, Fort Huachuca, Ariz.

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Covert: Now Dr. Covert.